

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a receiver tube that is adapted to receive a hitch bar, the method comprising:

providing a die, the die defining a die cavity with a first portion and a second portion, the first portion of the die having an upper surface and the second portion of the die having a lateral cross-section that is smaller than a lateral cross-section of the first portion;

providing a hollow tube having an inner surface and an outer surface;

providing a punch having a head, a body and a shaft, the head having a greater cross-section than both the body and the first portion of the die and including a lower surface thereon, the shaft extending from the body and being sized to fit within the hollow tube;

loading the hollow tube within the first portion of the die;

inserting the punch into the hollow tube such that the body abuts an end of the hollow tube; and

advancing the punch toward the die such that the lower surface of the punch head contacts the upper surface of the die, resulting in only a portion of the hollow tube is being extruded into the second portion of the die, the portion of the hollow tube in the second portion of the die forming a body portion of the receiver tube and an associated portion of the hollow tube remaining in the first portion of the die forming a

head portion of the receiver tube, wherein the head portion of the receiver tube is sized to a predetermined axial length as a result of the contact between the lower surface of the punch head and the upper surface of the die.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the hollow tube has a lateral cross-sectional shape selected from a group consisting of rectangular, square, and octagonal cross-sectional shapes.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first portion defines an opening that is larger than the hollow tube.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first portion includes a substantially constant portion and a transition portion, the transition portion being in juxtaposed relation with the substantially constant portion and the second portion of the die.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the transition portion tapers between the substantially constant portion and the second portion of the die so that a chamfer is formed on the head portion adjacent the body portion.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the portion of the hollow tube extruded into the second portion of the die has a wall thickness less than a wall thickness of the portion of the hollow tube in the first portion of the die.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the shaft extends through the hollow tube after the step of inserting the punch into the hollow tube.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the hollow tube has a substantially uniform wall thickness.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the shaft is unitarily formed.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the entire punch is unitarily formed.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the grain of the material of the trailer receiver tube within the head portion and the body portion extends parallel to a longitudinal axis of the receiver tube.

12. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the grain of the material of the trailer receiver tube within the chamfer runs at an angle to a longitudinal axis of the trailer receiver tube and parallel to an outer surface of the chamfer.

13. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the hollow tube is completely contained on the shaft of the punch and extends past the shaft after the punch has been advanced to form the receiver tube.

14. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the inner surface and the outer surface of the hollow tube are simultaneously formed by the punch and the die.